CENTRE FOR THE STUDY

OF LOCAL CULTURES

KARNATAKA, INDIA

A PIONEERING
EXAMPLE IN SOCIAL
SCIENCES RESEARCH

THE VLIR-UOS OWN INITIATIVE PROJECT

Development of a Centre for the Study of Local Cultures at Kuvempu University

Overall Project Objectives

Academic: Develop at Kuvempu University and other universities in Karnataka a social science research culture, knowledge on local problems of caste/inequality and pluralism/conflict, and insights into the traditional practical knowledge to solve these problems.

Developmental: Create insights into the role of culture in development policies and projects in Karnataka: promote strategies for conflict resolution and the struggle for equality, which take into account cultural backgrounds and traditional practical knowledge.

Specific Project Objectives

Academic: Develop at Kuvempu University a local research centre engaged in innovative social science research on local problems.

Developmental: Establish a feedback loop between the research centre and local society in Karnataka, its self-government bodies, its policy makers and its NGOs.

A VLIR-UOS Own Initiative Project
From 1 October 2007 to 30 November 2012
Ref. Nr: ZEIN 2007PR334 71493

This brochure has been written by the CSLC team, the Ghent team and Dr. Sufiya Pathan

WHAT IS THE CSLC?

The Centre for the Study of Local Cultures, better known as the CSLC, is a research centre at Kuvempu University located in the rural village Shankaraghatta in the Shimoga district of Karnataka (India). It is a centre dedicated to intensive and innovative research into the local society of Karnataka, to the widest possible dissemination of its research findings and, most significantly, to the promotion of a research culture in Karnataka and India at large. The overall objective of the CSLC is to reinvigorate the social sciences in India.

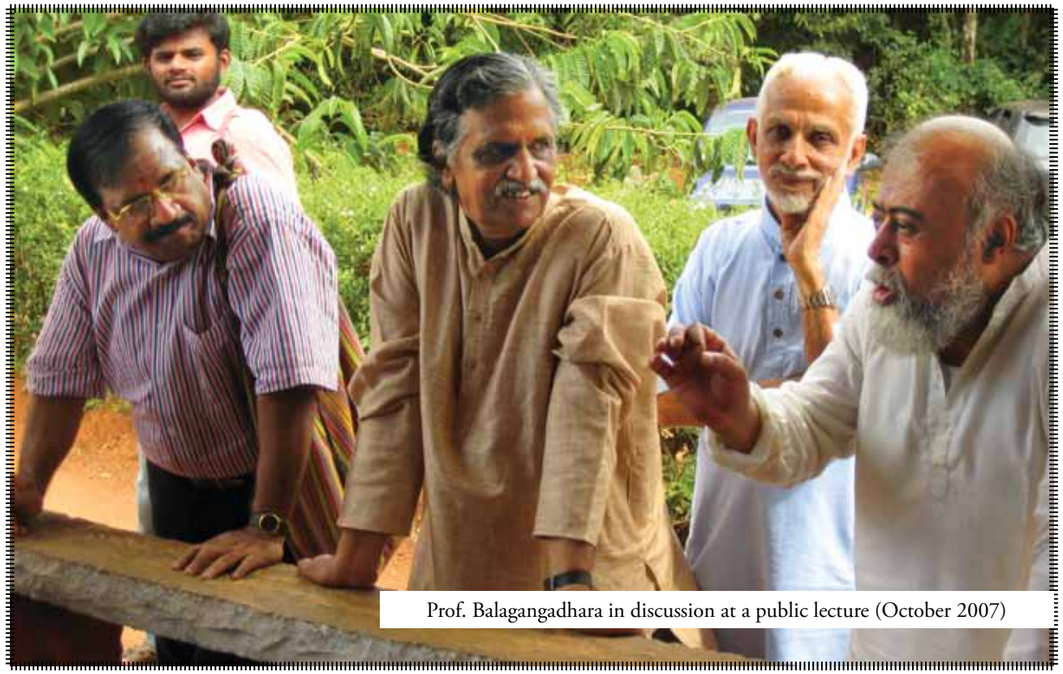
The research conducted at the CSLC is oriented towards understanding the local problems of caste/inequality and pluralism/conflict, and towards developing insights into the traditional practical knowledge to solve these problems. A massive ethnographic fieldwork on the caste relations in Karnataka has been conducted in all corners of the state. The fieldwork has led to new and scientific solutions to the existing problems, thereby meeting the needs of the local society. The research results are not only shared with students and scholars, but also with a general public from all walks of life. This happens through a range of activities: public lectures, intensive workshops, national and international conferences and seminars, a doctoral programme and training programmes in research methodology and skills fundamental to the social sciences for faculty and students across Karnataka. In this way a feedback loop has been established between the research centre and the local society in Karnataka. Due to its outreach activities and its presence in public debates, both in the traditional media and on online discussion forums, the CSLC is gradually becoming the reference point for politicians, NGO people and policy makers in Karnataka to consider problems related to caste and inequality as well as pluralism and conflict issues.

A reading session during a lecturer's Forum at the CSLC (December 2009)

WHY THIS BOOKLET?

Speaking about the achievements of an eight-year-old centre may seem either premature or self-congratulatory. The success of the CSLC should, however, be measured against the apparently barren soil for social sciences research in a remote and rural area of a developing country. This context poses a range of challenges, from lack of monetary resources, infrastructure and expert teachers to a lack of, or more importantly, an indifference towards research culture. The CSLC neither has a building of its own, nor world class infrastructural facilities to show off. Yet, its achievements in almost every domain it has entered outnumber those of well-established universities and university departments of Karnataka, if not India at large.

This booklet celebrates the centre's success by sharing it with all of you: the reader who does not know about the CSLC, the ones who were, and we hope will be part of the success in the future, the people of VLIR-UOS who made it all possible, our well-wishers, prospective doctoral research students and collaborators.



Prof. Balagangadhara in discussion at a public lecture (October 2007)

Some reflections by Professor Sadananda Janekere, Local Promoter of the project

Setting up a novel research centre, like the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures, could never have happened in a conventional university like ours without the help of the VLIR-OI project. We, at the CSLC, are deeply indebted to Ghent University in general to and our mentor Prof. Balu in particular. The Centre has made a big difference in the intellectual world of this region, i.e. Karnataka State. Its impact on other parts of India is not insignificant either, as the academic activities of the CSLC attracted scholars from different parts of India. The CSLC has carved out its own niche; it is not just as yet another research centre (there are in fact innumerable research centres established in various universities in India). It stood distinct from all other research centres in the country for several reasons. Firstly, because of its novel approach to the kind of research it has undertaken, which challenges the findings of the research hitherto undertaken in the domain of social sciences. Secondly, for devising and successfully implementing unique academic programmes like outreach sessions involving local people, whose knowledge has been totally neglected by the academics. And thirdly, for the annual conferences 'Dharma and Ethics' and 'Rethinking Religion in India', and for organising a large number of workshops for the benefit of young researchers and students of various colleges and universities.

The uniqueness of the CSLC has another dimension too. Until now it is believed that only reputable universities in India (like the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi) are capable of setting up a research centre in collaboration with a reputable European university. It was inconceivable that such a centre could be established in a university like ours, which is situated in a rural area and caters to the needs of rural students, a significant number of whom know only their local language. It was inconceivable, because it is believed that to establish a serious research centre, certain preconditions have to be met: it should be established in a cosmopolitan city; the researchers as well as the scholars involved in the research should be proficient in English and have direct access to the latests development in the western academic world etc. Going by this standard, Kuvempu University was wholly unsuited for the project. But soon we found that the so called disadvantages turned out to be advantages, in order to tread a new path in social science research. In the beginning, no one in the academic world took us seriously. Our challenge to the existing theories was even ridiculed. It did not take much time to change the atmosphere. Many of our popularising articles on contemporary issues were published in local newspapers and the centre soon attracted the attention of the people.

There were two kinds of responses: one group of people, who were dissatisfied with the ongoing ideological quarrels in the name of intellectual discussion and who were not able to wriggle out of a confusing situation, were glad: they now found a way out. They became the intellectual collaborators of the research centre. Another group, members of which felt their intellectual stance stood exposed, was hostile for a while. Because the CSLC took public intellectuals seriously and engaged in debates openly, these intellectuals started taking the university research seriously. This indeed is a major achievement of the CSLC. It has bridged a gap between public intellectuals and university scholars. It has also demonstrated through its various outreach programmes that one cannot think of building a theory about culture and society without including local knowledge.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSLC

• **2002-2004:** A series of meetings between Prof. J.S. Sadananda and Prof. Rajaram Hegde of Kuvempu University and Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara (Balu) of Ghent University, Belgium, led to a large-scale collaborative research project on caste and community in the rural areas of Karnataka (called "Caste, Community and Tradition in Karnataka"). This two-year project was funded by the 'Fund for Scientific Research', Flanders, Belgium. The preliminary results of this work were presented at a conference on the Vachanas and the Lingayat community in Ninasam (Heggodu, Karnataka) in January 2003.

• **2005:** Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara and his team at Ghent Univerity were granted a VLIR-UOS South Initiative project to organise 'Close reading seminars and research workshops at Kuvempu University'. This project allowed them to train some of the faculty members from the School of Social Sciences of this university. It resulted in the creation of a research group and a small library, which later became the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures.

Fieldwork - interview of villagers in Bijapur

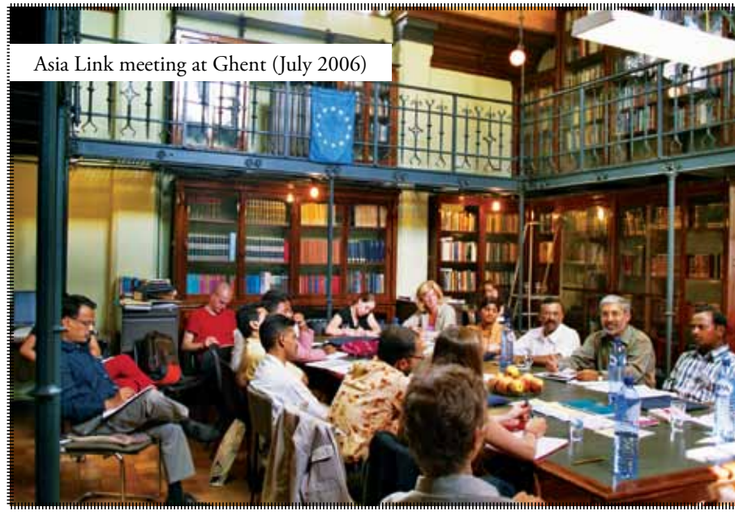
• **2006 June:** The start of a two year European Commission funded 'Asia-Link project' on the stereotypical images and cultural differences prevalent between Europe and South-Asia. It worked towards establishing a large-scale educational network between 5 universities from India, Sri Lanka and Europe, including Kuvempu University. Five research scholars belonging to the CSLC team were trained in pedagogical and research skills through this project.

• **2006 August:** The first activity of the Asia-Link project brought the entire CSLC team to Ghent in Belgium. Along with them the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar of Kuvempu University also came to Ghent. This enabled discussions about the future of the new research centre and resulted in an MoU and a Co-operation Agreement between Kuvempu University and Ghent University. Soon afterwards the MoU was signed and the two universities began their collaboration in developing the CSLC.

• **2007:** A proposal submitted in the 'Own Initiative' framework of the VLIR-UOS (Flemish Inter-University Council) to establish the CSLC at Kuvempu University with the objective to reinvigorate social sciences in India, was approved in December 2006. The project was started on the 1st of October in 2007. This was the start of a new phase: the CSLC could now grow from a small group of interested scholars and a few books into a fully operative research centre with PhD students, all the necessary facilities to do research, and the means to organise a range of academic and popular activities.

• **2008:** The first batch of doctoral students joined the CSLC.

• **2009:** The CSLC was recognised as a Postgraduate Department in Study and Research in Cultural Studies by Kuvempu University.



Asia Link meeting at Ghent (July 2006)

• **2011:** The VLIR-UOS awarded funding to the CSLC under their South Initiatives 2012 programme for a project titled, "Towards a research network in the social sciences and humanities in Karnataka". The South Initiatives programme provides 'harvest money' for broadening the impact of an earlier or on-going project. Under this initiative the CSLC intends to share its experience in the domain of building a coherent research programme with several other institutions in Karnataka and to give shape to their research and educational plans. Flagged off in December 2012, we hope that this project will be a big step in the direction of helping other universities to replicate the success of the CSLC, thereby promoting an even more dynamic research culture in Karnataka.

RESEARCH AND TRAINING

The research activities of the CSLC include two distinctive components: the fieldwork research on the one hand and the doctoral programme for PhD students on the other hand. As far as research topics are concerned the CSLC has focussed both on the reality of community relations in Karnataka and on the western understanding of caste and pluralism in Indian society. The extensive ethnographic fieldwork into the caste relations all over Karnataka helped forming the hypotheses for the first focus, while conceptual analyses of colonial and post-colonial literature on India helped develop insights in the western understanding of India.

The mammoth ethnographic fieldwork project

In 2005 a research project was started on caste and community in the rural areas of Karnataka with a focus on the rural areas surrounding Kuvempu University. The Own Initiative project allowed the CSLC to extend this research to the entire state of Karnataka. The fieldwork has focused upon sets of villages from every district of Karnataka and has covered more than 150 'castes' and 'sub-castes'. The data generated by the fieldwork is now available at the centre in audio files. The aim of this large-scale fieldwork project was to investigate a) the way communities such as Lingayats, Brahmins, etc., relate to one another; b) the internal differentiation, if any, among these communities (that is, are there 'castes' or 'sub-castes' among them?); c) the role played by the different traditions, that is, how different sampradayas (traditions) organise and differentiate communities and castes; and d) how democratic institutions and practices - elections, reservations, panchayats - influence the above three. As intended, over the last seven years, the fieldwork has generated massive qualitative data that has enabled the CSLC both to test the most influential theories of the caste-system and to begin alternative re-theorization of the logic of community formation in India. These findings have challenged some of the fundamental assumptions that constitute the field of caste research. They show that some of the so-called fundamental features of the caste system - hierarchy, endogamy, hereditary occupation, untouchability, and restrictions on commensality - do not hold even across a 200 km distance within today's Karnataka, let alone across the 4000 km that spans the Indian subcontinent.

The CSLC team has accumulated the data from the fieldwork into a collection of reading material, running into around 2400 pages by the end of 2012. Excerpts from this material are often drawn for circulation among the participants at an outreach programme or workshop and are also used in close reading sessions.

To get a sense of the magnitude of the CSLC fieldwork: more than 742 panchayat members from across Karnataka were interviewed in 2008 alone. Glimpses into the fieldwork data as well as some interpretations of the data can be found in the articles and books published by the CSLC members (see www.cslc.in) and in some of the blog posts on the Yahoo discussion forum.

→ http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheHeathenInHisBlindness

Fieldwork - interview at a Darga in Bijapur

MORE THAN THE MERE FIELD DATA

A personal note on the fieldwork by Kavitha P.N., PhD student

My involvement in the field studies and research work has been quite rewarding. My learning graph has been steadily growing ever since I joined the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures (CSLC). I am proud to say that during my association here, I feel I have truly learnt many different things, under the large umbrella of doing social science research. To illustrate this point, below are a few excerpts of my fieldwork, especially the interviews, which I feel are characteristic representations of this learning curve.

A typical conversation I used to engage in with the respondents during such fieldworks would proceed like this:

> *Me: Do you think that caste system exists in India?*
> *Respondent: Yes, Caste system exists.*
> *Me: Do you think untouchability is good or is it bad?*
> *Respondent: It is bad.*

Those were the beginning days of my research career, as I had just joined the CSLC; I was a novice, but with a lot of energy and enthusiasm; I was keen to be involved in fieldwork and began to visit different places in Karnataka in order to generate the necessary field data.

The conversation mentioned above is a typical example of my initial research perspective and how I framed questions and solicited answers. As you may notice, they were the typical close ended questions, ill framed, often discrete, quite unable to evoke an answer anything other than a 'yes' or 'no' from the respondent. There would be no attempt from me to ask any second set of questions containing a 'why' or a 'how' or 'how much' that would elicit more detailed replies. Unable to notice the inherent errors in those questions then, I would feel satisfied with the quick answers. My focus at that time was only to gather relevant data from the respondents.

The very feeling of having asked a research question and received an answer from them would make me happy.
That was the limited perception I had in those days. Put simply, my emphasis was more on generating data largely as yes-no, good-bad, agree-disagree opposites. Often I feel that I was just a 'data generator'. Now I realize that this limited perception prevented me from noticing several things: a) there was no positive growth in my thought processes, as I was not asking any further questions based on the replies, and b) I was not able to mingle and interact with the communities in the field except in a formal and mechanical way, I wasn't sensitive to their perceptions.

As the days progressed at the CSLC, and as the group discussions, informal meetings, coffee table talks and such gatherings started to take shape with other colleagues there, my understanding and perceptions of social science research began to slowly expand, widen and deepen. It would direct me to the many insights and nuances in the necessary skills and aptitude necessary to be a researcher. This collective learning helped me enormously to refine and realign my fieldwork strategies. In the process, I was better informed in terms of how to interact with people, how to frame a research question, how to elicit a reply and how to be sensitive to their perceptions. I started using this new learning for my subsequent fieldwork. Now the field interviews would not stop at yes-no contrasts but would continue.

A typical conversation in its refined fashion would proceed like this:

> *Me: Do you think that caste system exists in India?*
> *Respondent: Yes, it exists in India.*
> *Me: Then how would you describe the caste system? What does caste system mean to you?*
> *Respondent: You know, (as everybody says), all castes come under one system and that is the caste system.*
> *Me: What do you mean by "all castes come under one system"? Into which system all the castes are brought?*
> *Respondent: The same thing you know, as everybody says that there is this 'system', and into this 'system' all castes are brought.*
> *Me: OK, what do you mean by the 'system'? Do you know what a system is? Do you know the principles of the so called caste 'system' as you recognised?*
> *Respondent: No, We do not know about the system, neither we are aware of the principles of caste system.*
> *We simply use these terms because everybody else uses them.*
> *Me: Do you think it is appropriate to use these terms without being fully aware of what the caste system is?*
> *Respondent: No, we should not, I agree with you. We did not realize until now that we were using these terms quite casually…*

If one compares both the episodes of my field interviews, one would notice two things: a) as against a predetermined set of rigid questions in the first instance, I was trying to go deeper into the research issue, b) I did not stop at the first set of answers, I was framing subsequent questions and encouraging the respondent to think and answer, as a means of eliciting the true picture of his understanding of the central issue (in the second instance), while in the first instance I was jumping over to the next question, once some answer was given. I feel that this positive shift in my approach was the result of my learning at the CSLC: firstly, my continued engagement with the research problem had actually enhanced my ability to think about the problem; secondly, my passionate involvement in the research studies helped me to recognise the broader scope of this particular research question of 'caste' and elevated it from the precincts of my project and place in the realm of the common people. This had a tremendously positive impact on my field interviews. Accordingly, it would help me relate this subject as though it is the subject of the people, which was true. Consequently, my communities and I started recognising ourselves within the 'research problem', and the barrier between me and them (as researcher-respondent) evaporated.

We began to realize that it is not just a 'research problem of academic importance' for a researcher, but it is the 'problem of the masses' relevant to the contemporary society, and that way it is related to all of us. As a result of this shift in perspective, I have been able to overcome the formal and mechanical tone with which I was struggling earlier, which had prevented me from being sensitive to the issues and eventually kept me unrelated to the field problem. But now I feel that I am one among the people around me.

This understanding has brought about a setting, in which we feel that we are familiar to each other and the several elements that bind us together. All of this - my growth as a researcher with the necessary skills of doing social science research, my ability to engage in positive thinking, shift in my perspectives and confidence levels, enhanced understanding of me-people-society, ability to face the challenges the life throws at me - would not have been possible had I not had the opportunity to join CSLC and engage in the innovative social science research there, which is first-of-its-kind. Becoming a part of CSLC to me was more than just becoming a researcher there- it has helped me refine my persona. I owe all of this to the CSLC.

THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The CSLC developed an innovative and intensive doctoral programme for full-time PhD students. To develop such a programme without relying on existing social science programmes was necessary because of the absence of a scientific research culture in the Indian education system and especially in a rural context. The first batch of seven doctoral students were asked to stay on the campus for a minimum of three years in order to undergo a multi-faceted intensive training. The doctoral programme includes training modules in reading and summarizing texts, the presentation of research findings, working with concept maps as well as classes in English and translation skills and training in IT. Besides these training modules the programme also consists of close reading of relevant texts and special lectures on fundamental theories and key issues in the Western intellectual tradition. The PhD students were engaged in all workshops and conferences organised by the CSLC, in the extensive group fieldwork undertaken for the caste project and in organisational activities. Once the students gained some grasp over their research topic, special workshops with experts were organised in order to help them prepare their research proposals, formulate sharp research questions, and train them in fieldwork methods.

To some of these workshops doctoral students from other departments of Kuvempu University were also invited so that the maximal number of students could benefit from them. Along with the workshops, the invited scholars also delivered Special Lectures for the whole university. Scholars from different parts of India and abroad have visited the CSLC under this programme.

Doctoral training at the CSLC (february 2009)

A testimonial by Shankarappa N.S., PhD student

I have participated in English classes at the CSLC for the last four years. I was very poor in English before coming to the CSLC, but I learnt a lot during these classes, like English grammar, writing and speaking skills. Now I am able to speak with others in English and to write on some issues in English, including the Dalit issue. The teachers of the CSLC are always there to answer my questions regarding English grammar. One more important thing is that I have presented two papers in international conferences and it was appreciated by many international scholars. This is not only applicable for me but also applicable to the group of researchers associated with the CSLC project.

Besides learning English, I learnt how to do research. Even though I read a lot of books from first standard to post-graduation, I didn't have the ability to grasp the arguments and to situate the context of a text. A research student should have some capacities like finding out the arguments, analyzing the text and the phenomena and so on. The close reading classes made me a research student. Now I can read an article and a book with better understanding. And I know the importance of a theory in research, the difference between social problems and research problems, the formation of research questions and hypotheses and so on.

PHD THESES

Five doctoral theses have been completed by the CSLC doctoral students:

- "Bharatadalli Jativyavaste: Buntara Vidhiacharanegala Ondu Adhyayana" (The Caste System: A Case Study of Rituals of Bunts) by Santhosh Kumar P.K.
- "Dalita Chaluvaligala Swarupa mattu Samasyegalu" (The Nature and the Problems of Dalit Movements) by Shankarappa N.S.
- "Karnatakada Darga Sampradayagalu" (Darga Traditions in Karnataka) by Mahesh Kumar C.S.
- "Samajada Pratinidikarana: Samajavijnanagalu mattu Samajika Kaadambarigalu" (Social Representation: Social Science and Social Novels) by Praveen T.L.
- "Vasahatusamayada Samajika Vargikaranada Adhyayana - Visheshavagi Karnatakakke Sambandisidante" (A Study of Social Classification during Colonialism – Reference: Karnataka) by Kavitha P.N.

The students who have newly joined the CSLC are exploring various connected research areas. They are helped and guided by the senior students who act as resource persons for the centre's continuing work of doctoral guidance.

Reviewing notes (2011)

TRANSLATIONS

One of the challenges confronted by the CSLC is the limited knowledge of English among the rural students. As most of the educational material that is needed to teach social sciences at the Master's and doctoral level is in English, the CSLC has put great emphasis on building a corpus of material translated from English into Kannada, the language of the state of Karnataka. All PhD students were actively involved in this translation work. The students were given practical lessons and were assigned translation tasks supervised by the faculty. Two goals were achieved through the translations: on the one hand English literature was made available to social sciences students and to the general public of Karnataka; on the other hand the PhD students of the CSLC gained a better understanding of the texts and improved their English significantly. Four Kannada books are the fruit of this translation effort, some of which have even topped the best seller lists in Kannada for several weeks:

Release of the Kannada translation of Prof. Balagangadhara's book The Heathen in His Blindness (August 2010)

1) Smruti-Vismruti: Bharatiya Samskriti (Remembrance, Amnesia: Indian Culture) (2009)
2) Poorvaavalookana (Observing the East/the Past) (2010)
3) Bharatadalli JatiVyavasthe Ideye? (Is There a Caste System in India?) (2012)
4) Hudukaatavannu Nillisadirona (We Shall Not Cease from Exploration) (2012)

Besides these books several articles were translated into Kannada. For a list of the Kannada articles, see www.cslc.in > publications. So far, this work has been done on a voluntary basis by the students and by interested scholars. Because the translations are crucially linked to a broader process of rural development, the CSLC has decided the time has come to give the translation work a more institutional shape and support. This will be realised in the course of the coming years.

OUR LIBRARY

One of the major challenges that the CSLC faced in its endeavour to build a research centre in a rural area is to have a good library. Good libraries are yet to be developed in higher education institutions, including state universities, in India. A major reason for their non-existence is a lack of research culture that creates the need for and generates the appropriate use of a good library. Kuvempu University is no exception. It is a rural university with a very limited library collection in the social sciences and humanities. Another major problem is the lack of funds to acquire books. In the case of the CSLC the VLIR project has solved that problem to a great extent. Consequently, the faculty members of the CSLC and the Ghent team collaborated in developing a library collection consisting of basic colonial sources, relevant social science literature, introductory and fundamental texts in philosophy, philosophy of science and general reference works. Another strategy used was to allocate a fixed amount of money from the library budget to every doctoral student and faculty of the CSLC and ask them to buy the books (under all applicable conditions and constraints) that he/she finds pertinent to his/her research. This, we saw, encouraged the students to keep themselves up-to-date with the new research and literature in their respective fields. The students who bought books were also made responsible to enter them in the library catalogue. To do that they were trained, through a workshop, in the use of library software, like Zotero. Additionally, many individuals helped by donating books from their valuable individual collections. Mention must be made of Ashok Dhareshwar, who donated more than a thousand valuable and rare books to the library. Today, our library consists of more than 5000 books and is considered the best library for research in social sciences and humanities in the region.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, LECTURES & OUTREACH

Since 2006-07, the CSLC has organised many activities in a variety of formats both in English and in Kannada — online discussion forums, conferences, workshops, lectures, discussions, training sessions, outreach sessions and informal gatherings. The academic activities have brought internationally acclaimed scholars to the small and rural campus of Kuvempu University, have helped to build and consolidate a network of scholars that can engage in fruitful discussions on the research themes of the CSLC and have allowed the PhD students to organise and participate in national and international conferences both in India and Europe. The activities meant for a broader audience have introduced representatives from various sections of society to the research of the CSLC and have created a link between this research and the society.

National conferences *Dharma & Ethics*

The annual national conference *Dharma and Ethics* has become one of the well-known conferences in Karnataka and beyond. Seven editions have already taken place. It has grown into a forum where research results are shared on topics and questions related to the CSLC research with scholars of Karnataka and other states of India.

The themes of the previous 7 conferences were:

1. Indian Traditions at the Dawn of the 21st Century (2005 - Kuvempu University)
2. Caste Discrimination: Hinduism, Buddhism and Liberalism (2006 - Kuvempu University)
3. Representation of Caste in Kannada Literature (2008 - Kuvempu University)
4. Rethinking Political Thought in Modern India (2009 - Kuvempu University)
5. Decolonising Social Sciences (2011 - Vivekananda Institute of Indian Studies, Mysore)
6. Religion, Tradition and Law (2012 - Karnataka State Law University, Hubli)
7. Travails of Modernity (2012 - Centre for the Education and Social Studies, Bangalore)

All information about the *Dharma & Ethics* conferences can be found on

→ http://www.cultuurwetenschap.be/dharma-and-ethics

Mrs. Polly Hazarika, associated researcher, about *Dharma & Ethics*

> *I have been attending the annual* Dharma and Ethics Conference *since its first inception. As a student, I found it an extraordinarily exhilarating space, where I could watch and learn from some of the best minds, as they systematically posed and solved problems in the field of social sciences in India. The level of discussions and the way in which questions were pursued were something I had not seen in any other forum. Over the years, I went from being in the audience, to participating in the discussions. And now, as a university faculty member, I ensure that my students also have the benefit of participating in this extraordinary annual intellectual event. Participating in the* Dharma and Ethics *annual conference has allowed my students to have a completely different perspective on what academic discussions can be. As a teacher, I feel that this conference has had a far reaching impact in raising the standards of academic discussions within the social sciences.*

International conferences *Rethinking Religion in India*

The CSLC has collaborated with Ghent University in organising the 5-year international conference cluster *Rethinking Religion in India (RRI)*. The themes of the four conferences were:

1. Are there Native Religions in India? (2008 - Delhi, India)
2. Rethinking Secularism (2009 - Delhi, India)
3. European Representations and Indian Responses (2011 - Pardubice, Czech Republic)
4. Secularism, Religion and Law (2012 - Mangalore, India)

These conferences have functioned as a forum to share the research results of the CSLC with an audience of international scholars (for more information about the conferences, see: www.rethinkingreligion.org).

In our effort to have meaningful academic exchanges with the widest possible public, it has been our policy to film the most important sessions of these two conference series and make them available on youtube.

→ http://www.youtube.com/user/cultuurwetenschap

→ http://www.youtube.com/user/dharmaandethics

A word from Dr. Shanmukha Armugan, Deputy Director of the CSLC

The first impression I have is that we have been able to build a solid group of researchers, who have been actively engaged in debates on socio-cultural issues in Karnataka. No academic meetings today on these issues take place in Karnataka without mentioning the CSLC group.

The questions this research group raises on socio-cultural issues are so fundamental, that no one can ignore or sideline our arguments and carry on their debate. This trend has become common sense in almost all universities and other academic programs. This is because of the kind of in-depth research work this group has carried out and the way it has put its research findings to the academic world. Here the CSLC conference clusters played a vital role in spreading our findings among the various academic circles. The Rethinking Religion in India and the Dharma and Ethics conferences are such platforms for the group.

Rethinking Religion in India (RRI) provided a global level platform for us to put forward our research findings for open debate. It has become a testing tool of soundness and quality of our research work. In a way it is a kind of scrutiny for our group's tasks. The quality of presentations, discussions and questions of CSLC researchers were appreciated by the audience and academic experts in the concerned field. This has generated more inspiration and confidence among us. Our fellows in the Ghent group always motivated us to talk fearlessly in such international forums. Hence, the rural background and non-expertise or non-sophistication in English did not demoralize the CSLC researchers to actively participate in these conferences.

Dharma and Ethics is another forum for discussing our research findings. This conference has contributed in disseminating our research to the academics in the Karnataka region. Every year, we take up a particular domain such as Dharma, literature, political thinking, caste studies, decolonizing social sciences, law and religion, modernity and modernisation and so on. Here we raise some of the fundamental issues in those domains and have in-depth discussions. The important aspect or outcome of these Dharma and Ethics conference series, is that through the discussions in these conferences, most of the research problems of the doctoral researches have been developed. We can say that the research problems develop through the discussion of the Dharma and Ethics debates. Then, the researcher works on those research problems and develops new hypotheses or insights through the fieldworks. And the results are again presented in the RRI conferences. Through these cyclical processes our doctoral and other researches get refined again and again.

Because the CSLC team also wanted to experiment with new formats to stimulate local discussions, it started several new series of meetings too. The following activities, all of which have been extensively reported about in the Indian press, are examples of the new kinds of successful meetings held.

Yearly cultural meetings *Samvada Lahari (Waves of discussion)*

A series of conferences or cultural meetings called *Samvada Lahari (Waves of Discussion)* was initiated by the CSLC in collaboration with Jivanmukhi, a cultural organisation at Sirsi in the North Kanara District of Karnataka. The idea of these 3-day meetings is to bring sustained discussions among expert scholars on one particular theme to an audience of educated people outside of the academic environment. An important element of these cultural meetings are performances of local art forms related to the theme of the meeting followed by discussions among the performers and the invited scholars.

Discussion at the Samvada Lahari II in Sirsi (October 2012)

Workshop on Research Methods and Modes in Dharwad (January 2009)

Workshops on Research Methods and Modes

In 2009 the Indian charitable trust, Sri Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) provided funding for a series of workshops on research methods and modes pertaining to research in the social sciences for aspiring research students, young research scholars and undergraduate teachers.

The workshops were conducted in various places such as Rastrakavi Kuvempu Prathistana (Kuppali), Anatha Sevashrama (Malladhihalli) and Ninasam (Heggodu, Sagara). The dynamism, productivity and research results of the CSLC showcased during these workshops did not escape the attention of the faculty of other universities in Karnataka. Consequently, there came a growing demand to the CSLC team to organise lectures and research workshops at universities and research institutes across the state. The CSLC responded to this demand by organising a series of workshops on research skills for doctoral students of different universities of Karnataka. These workshops were designed to teach reading, reasoning and presentation skills to students in the local vernacular language, something which turned out to be badly needed in Karnataka. The CSLC team has organised 22 such workshops since 2010. More than 1600 undergraduate and post graduate students have been trained through these workshops. (For a geographical representation of the locations of these 22 workshops, see www.umapper.com/maps/view/id/92111).

Outreach sessions with NGOs, Gram Panchayat members and policy makers

The CSLC has brought together NGOs, panchayat members (members of the local governments), policy makers and the local population in day-long workshops to discuss alternative and traditional methods of resolving the problems they face in life and to familiarise them with results of the contemporary research on local social problems. An important aim of these sessions is to solicit reflections on the traditional practical knowledge to solve social problems. This, we believe, will bridge the gap between social scientific research and local society.

Outreach session in Nannival (May 2010)

Outreach session in Heggodu (January 2010)

Public lecture in Sirsi (January 2011)

These outreach sessions were held at Shimoga, Heggodu (Tirthahalli Taluk), the traditional Kattemane at Nannivala (Chitradurga District), Madantiyar (South Kanara District) and Shankarghatta. In total more than 200 people with experience in the field of conflict resolution provided authentic information during these sessions.

As a result of these outreach sessions the CSLC has been able to formulate productive research questions and hypotheses about the native systems of conflict resolution. It has also generated useful insights about the nature of the traditional nyaya modes of conflict resolution in India and its difference with the Western legal system. These results have been presented in the 6th Dharma and Ethics conference.

Public lecture in Manchikeri (August 2011)

Special public lectures

Several series of special public lectures by the promoter of the VLIR-UOS project, Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara, took place in different parts of Karnataka during 2010-2012. As Prof. Balagangadhara's books and articles had already been translated into Kannada and had generated a lot of heated debate among the Kannada intellectuals, the response to these lectures was overwhelming and intense.

Not only intellectuals attended the lectures, but so did teachers, lawyers, educated farmers, businessmen, local leaders, swamis, newspaper reporters and columnists. Several fora from different parts of Karnataka, engaged in debates on public issues, offered to host the lectures. As the success and demand grew, other members of the CSLC and the Ghent team also started giving lectures.

The public lectures played an important role in popularising the CSLC's research throughout Karnataka. A total number of 27 lectures took place between October 2010 and May 2012 in 14 districts of Karnataka. Through these lectures the CSLC has been able to interact with over 2100 people and thereby to disseminate its research results and generate wide-spread discussion about it. The most striking and important aspect of these lectures is that it has demonstrated that the social scientific research conducted at the CSLC is regarded as highly relevant to and resonates with people from diverse backgrounds of our society. Because of this link the CSLC special lecture series can be seen as a unique experiment in the field of Indian academic research.

Inauguration of the public lecture in Mandya (August 2011)

Public lecture and workshop in Mudabidare (August 2011)

Lecture at Tumkur University (August 2011)

Lecturers' forum

The CSLC has also set up a lecturers' forum, consisting of lecturers of various colleges affiliated to Kuvempu University. In the future the CSLC intends to offer its resources to the entire undergraduate teachers' community of Karnataka. Both the workshops on Research Methods and Modes and the Lecturer's Forum are an attempt to teach basic research skills to the participants: how to formulate research questions, logical reasoning, reading skills, thesis writing skills, public intervention, preparing a project proposal, addressing social issues and such like. As an outcome of the activities of the lecturers' forum, a few workshops in the form of a roundtable discussion were organised on the following themes: 'Responses of Kannada Literature to Modernity', 'Rethinking Sanskritisation' and 'Innovative Research Methodology in Social Sciences'.

Sandeep Kumar Shetty, Programme Officer at the CSLC, on the public lectures and the media participation

The researchers at the CSLC had to look for new ways of communicating the research to the general public. The research that Balu and his group are doing is not just to get PhD degrees or to remain in the stacks of university libraries, which would be dusted once a year. Their research addressed the problems of the Indian society. Because of this approach people were able to respond to the outcome of the research.

We chose two ways, public lectures and writing articles about the implication of the research on the social issues. With the idea of giving public lectures came the question where to start. A farmer from a village close to Sirsi volunteered and said that he would arrange a lecture in his village.

Workshop - Reaction of Kannada Literature to Modernity - Kuvempu University (May 2009)

The first lecture that Balu gave outside the academic circles was received in a wonderful way. The group came back from Sirsi with the satisfaction that the lecture went well, but Sirsi was never the same again! They found a ray of hope to get answers for the many questions they had in their mind, about the academic descriptions of the society they lived in. These descriptions never came close to their experience in society. They started asking us to come back to Sirsi to speak more about our research. In the meantime, the group started organising lectures all over Karnataka. Farmers, housewives, lawyers, dancers, singers, coolies, etc. started following the research programme. The questions we asked troubled them and motivated them to seek answers. They kept coming back to us, sometimes with lots of confidence, sometimes happy, sometimes puzzled, sometimes angry and sometimes annoyed.

Now our research programme became theirs, and that of everyone. One comment by a participant in a lecture held in Belgaum said it all: "Until now, I thought the research that had been taking place in the universities was only for academics, not for us. But your research is so easy to follow, it comes close to my experience." In the following two years, the CSLC team was invited to different places in Karnataka and India to give lectures. The ice was broken, and now many people are joining the research programme through these lectures.

The second method to popularise the research programme was through the media. The issues of sociological importance were taken up and the researchers wrote comments on them. These comments were sent to the local newspapers and to Kannada dailies. The articles were well received and debated. These writings gave the research programme a larger audience. It was heartening to see the newly discovered audiences joining in with comments in the local newspapers (one of the participants even published his thoughts as a book), along with many others who supported the research programme.

Shivkumar on Bayalu

Amongst the many kinds of activities the CSLC is organising, there is a group discussion series called "Bayalu". These group discussions influenced many master degree and PhD students of Kuvempu University and I am one of them. Here we were discussing issues like problems of social sciences, problems of the society, with a new scientific perspective. The discussions developed reading, writing, argumentation skills, and a kind of training for the scientific study of our society. I was confused about the relationship between my own experience, and the socio-political theories, which I studied in my school and college days. When I participated in the Bayalu discussions, I had new insights in the social problems and theories. As a result, I have prepared a dissertation report in my masters on "Prohibition of Cow slaughter - a critical study" in the light of Balu's thoughts and with the help of the CSLC. I was able to understand and explain the issue of the prohibition of cow slaughter better than the current explanations. I'm really grateful to this group for generating new kinds of research attitudes in many students with a rural background, like myself. Now, I have joined this CSLC group as a PhD student. I wish to continue this new kind of training and help many students in the future.

ĀSHA, AN ACADEMY FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

One of the ways in which the CSLC intended to contribute to the rejuvenation of the social sciences in Karnataka was to establish an Academy for Social Sciences and Humanities in Karnataka (ĀSHA). The academy was envisioned as an umbrella institution for all universities in Karnataka, with the aim of developing a long-term and sustainable vision for the social sciences and humanities in Karnataka. In the initial phase, meetings were held with vice-chancellors of the state universities in Karnataka, all of whom agreed upon establishing the academy. In a second phase support was sought from the Government of Karnataka (GoK) and from the Central Government of India (GoI). In this regard Prof. Balagangadhara and Prof. J.S. Sadananda had meetings with a number of ministers, both at the GoK and the GoI level (Higher Education, External Affairs, Human Resource Development), as well as with Mr. Rahul Gandhi (Vice President of the Indian National Congress party).

Even though the relevant politicians and bureaucrats expressed considerable support for the initiative, it became clear that going through government representatives would not be sufficient. The project needed to gain traction in society and needed general support from the people in Karnataka in order to succeed. To achieve this a different course was taken. The new course consisted in building the academy from the bottom up - by organising a variety of research-based activities for the people of Karnataka and by building a network of scholars and research groups. As a result, awareness of the importance of social-scientific research culture is crystallising in Karnataka. This can be seen in the following recent developments:

- Three organisations that promote and conduct social-scientific research into Indian culture and society have taken shape: Jivanmukhi in Sirsi, Aarohi in Bangalore, and the Development Foundation in Bangalore.

- Steps are taken to build new research centres modeled on the CSLC. A Centre for Social Science has been inaugurated at the Sahyadri College of Engineering (Mangalore) and the Gokula Education Foundation (Bangalore) is currently planning the creation of a new Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, which will continue the same research agenda. Similarly, there has been a request from outside of Karnataka (IIT Jodhpur in Rajasthan) to help build a research institute.

- Several engineering colleges have made requests to teach social science modules to their students. A first such pilot course was successfully given by the members of the Ghent team at the BMS College of Engineering in Bangalore. Other requests are now following.

- The research methodology workshops conducted by the CSLC have helped the team to develop innovative methods in social science teaching and research and have succeeded in stimulating research interest among youngsters all over Karnataka.

- The translations of social-scientific texts into Kannada have enabled the new hypotheses and arguments to reach a wider public in Karnataka and are beginning to generate research in local languages.

Through these activities the CSLC is getting access to private educational groups that can provide the necessary logistic and financial support for ĀSHA. The ĀSHA we dreamt of is slowly and unexpectedly taking the form of a societal movement. This is more than we hoped for at the start of the project.

Module in social sciences at the BMS College of Engineering (July 2011)

Professor Rajaram Hegde, Director of the CSLC, about the status of social sciences in India

Before this project, I had several big questions about the status of social science research in our university in general and my research career in particular. My general questions were like the following: is it possible to develop alternative theories that can explain Indian society better than the existing ones? Is it possible to impart the research skills needed to develop such theories to the students from rural areas, who have problems with English? Now, after experimenting for the last five years in this project, I am convinced that such a task is possible. We have been able to develop a promising research programme in this regard. More than that, there are some extra rewards. We realized that, through our outreach sessions and public lectures, the research conducted in the university evokes the interest of the public. Our research themes were heatedly debated by the educated public through the media. People participated with special interest in our public lecture and interaction programme, and in the discussions that followed them.

Personally speaking, before I got involved in this research project, I had several unanswered questions about the research I was pursuing at that time, and almost came to the conclusion that social science is largely irrelevant as far as the Indian socio-cultural problems are concerned. I had lost interest in pursuing such a kind of research. My involvement in this project has provided me with a totally new research methodology, and with questions which have made my research an interesting and fruitful endeavor. I also realized that I was lacking the basic research skills before I got associated with this project.

Apart from research skills, this project has enhanced my skill in research presentation, research training, writing articles (both research and popularising articles) and writing research proposals. All these activities have rewarded me with an amount of creativity in reasoning skill which will certainly help me in the future for theory building and guiding research. Due to translating a book and a few articles myself and guiding my colleagues and students closely in translation, my skills in our local language Kannada have improved to a great extent.

There is an even more valuable dimension in what I have gained over the last five years. I learnt that research is not simply an academic activity. It amounts to building a community with a bond based on concerns and love for each other. Despite all the problems and challenges of individual idiosyncrasies, we are learning and teaching ways to act as a group, set priorities and dedicate ourselves to the task. To attain the suitable temperament for such a task, I took recourse to regular meditation for the last three years, and also involved students in it. Because of such experiments, today I am a happier person than I was before five years. My involvement in this project has thus provided me with personal happiness, and all kinds of seemingly non- academic competences: administration, group building, organising academic events, establishing public contact and so on.

In one sense, not being able to establish an officially recognised Academy of Social Sciences (ASHA) could be seen as a major failure of the CSLC. But it is not a failure at all. Going around meeting ministers and bureaucrats for financial assistance from the state has taught us a lesson about how not to go about building a social science research centre in India. Half of the effort that we have put in would have been sufficient to convince them to build a research centre in technology. That is the language the government under the tutelage of globalization understands. Everyone talks about the impact of globalization on our society and culture in mostly negative terms, but no politician is convinced that it is high time we took up social science research seriously in order to avert a major apocalypse in the future. Top academics are busy spinning out borrowed theories from the west to exhibit their scholarship appearing to be more worried about their political correctness than about impartial scientific enquiry. We are now convinced that any meaningful research in the domain of social science can only take place in India when we keep these two groups at a distance.

Public lecture in Manchikeri (August 2011)

Balagangadhara, the promoter of this project, led me as a friend and teacher, trusting and building confidence in me. He taught me what it is to be a teacher and a researcher. His personal inspiration and guidance is behind whatever I gained through this project. The Ghent scholars were friendly and concerned. They guided us, shared the greater burden of carrying out this project. Associating with them was an opportunity to enjoy and grow together. Today, looking back and reviewing the tasks and achievements we have been able to realize within this project period, I feel I could never have dreamt of spending my academic life more fruitfully and meaningfully than this.

PUBLICATIONS

The books and articles that have been published by the members of the CSLC give an idea of the nature of the research that the centre houses, teaches and disseminates. They show the importance of the research to the region and to the nation as a whole and the quality of its research programme and research training. In total the CSLC students and staff wrote 9 research articles. Along with these scholarly writings they actively participated in debates on current social issues and events that took place in the printed media and on online forums. Over 50 popularising articles have been published in leading Kannada daily newspapers like Vijayavani, Udayavani, Prajavani, Hosadiganta, Vijaya Karnataka, and Kannada Prabha. Recently, the newspaper Vijayavani has asked Prof. Balagangadhara and Prof. Rajaram Hegde to write a weekly Sunday column on the research of the CSLC. Along with the publications of the CSLC other people have started to write about their research in newspapers. Due to the success these articles have been compiled into a book that has recently been published and appeared in the best seller list for several weeks (for a complete list of all the articles published, see www.cslc.in > publications).

The following are some of the online discussion forums that carry the contributions of the CSLC members:

http://sampada.net/ (in Kannada)
http://cslcku.wordpress.com/ (in Kannada)
http://nilume.wordpress.com/ (in Kannada)
http://avadhimag.com (in Kannada)
http://sampadakeeya.blogspot.com/ (in Kannada)
www.youtube.com/user/dharmaandethics
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheHeathenInHisBlindness/

Praveen T.L., PhD student, about the blog discussions and the presence in the media

I have been reading and following the blog discussions about many socio-cultural issues of Karnataka. Many discussions were focused on blaming the individuals or criticizing or praising some ideology of a group. We could not find any systematic discussion which could improve our knowledge. For the last 2-3 years, we - the young researchers of CSLC - started to interfere in these blog discussions in Karnataka, and the structure of the discussions changed completely. Blaming the individual or group and simply praising someone prevented a discussion from focusing on an issue. Our research group, after some research, started to look at the issue in a different manner. So today, the blog writers belong to different backgrounds, such as software engineers, traders, businessmen, or administrators of a temple. They are impressed by our research and the kind of discussion the CSLC has introduced. Furthermore, they attend many programs organised by CSLC, and made these programs successful.

On the one hand, the CSLC research affected Kannada intellectuals through blog discussions. On the other hand, CSLC group research made tremendous changes in the way people think about their own society, by writing many articles in newspapers, journals and publishing many books. Those books, published by the CSLC, stayed in the top 5 position for many months in terms of sales.

These publications were received and popularised by people who were fed up with the old ideas. They responded to our research immediately, as it resonates with their own experiences. These publications and blog discussions clarified much confusion regarding our research and research group.

Many professors from different universities are interested in discussing with young researches like me about our research. Today, many people identify the effort of the CSLC and opine that the real research has taken place only in CSLC, Kuvempu University. This project impressed a huge amount of people in a short period of time. This happened, not because of any researchers/individual's personal skills/talents; it was possible only because of the CSLC which generated new kind of research in the area of social sciences in India. So I found this CSLC project promising, sorely needed for the younger generation, and with much potential for building new theories, which will help to rejuvenate the social sciences in India.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

	Objectively Verifiable Indicators and Targets	Results
SPECIFIC ACADEMIC OBJECTIVE 1		
PhD students active at CSLC	8	5+5
Completed PhD dissertations	4	5
Ongoing research projects	2	4
SPECIFIC ACADEMIC OBJECTIVE 2		
Published articles	9	14+39
Books	0	7
Presentations at conferences or workshops	15	38
Project proposals	2	5
SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVE 1		
Gram panchayat members participated in project activities	60	200
NGO representatives and policy makers participated in project activities	30	40
SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVE 2		
Individuals attended Arivu lectures	100	1760
Development projects or policy meetings involving CSLC research	3	Indirect impact through society participation
INTERMEDIATE RESULTS (IR) – RESEARCH RELATED		
IR1. A research culture in social sciences takes shape at the CSLC: local scholars are trained to do innovative research and develop new hypotheses on problems of case/inequality and pluralism/conflict		
1.1. Publication on caste and pluralism in social science journals	Minimum 1 every year from Y2 onwards	Year 1: 2 Year 2: 2 Year 3: 2 Year 4: 2 Year 5: 6
1.2. Publications on caste and pluralism in popular media	Minimum 2 every year from Y2 onwards	Year 1: 7 Year 2: 7 Year 3: 7 Year 4: 6 Year 5: 12
1.3. Annual report on the 2 ongoing research projects	1 every year	Research notes Audio-visual reports of the international conferences
INTERMEDIATE RESULTS (IR) – CAPACITY BUILDING RELATED		
IR 2. Capacity Building: An independent research and management team staffs the CSLC		
2.1. PhD dissertations completed	4	5
2.2. Project proposal submitted to donors	Minimum 1 every year from Y3 onwards	Year 3: 4 Year 4: 3 Year 5: 0 (Project granted: 2)
2.3. CSLC leading faculty members spending in total 9 months of training stays at Ghent University.	3	1
IR 3. The foundation is laid for a Master's Programme in Comparative Science of Cultures		
3.1. Pages of educational material prepared	500	10.400
3.2. Pilot courses taught	4	27
3.2. MA curriculum completed	1	1 (Diploma course)
3.3. Pages of relevant social science literature translated into local languages	500	1193

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

	Objectively Verifiable Indicators and Targets	Results
IR 4. Autonomous agenda is set for social scientific research in Karnataka: Task Force works towards the establishment of a Karnataka Academy of Social Sciences		
4.1. Meetings of ĀSHA Task Force	2 every year in Y1 and Y2	Year 1: 27 Year 2: 18 Year 3: 29 Year 4: 26 Year 5: 7
4.2. Vision document and action plan	1+1 by the end of Y1	Year 1: 2+1 + draft of by-law and statutes Year 2: 2 Year 5: 1
4.3. Meetings between ĀSHA Task Force and government officials	Minimum 2 every year in Y1 and Y2	Year 1: 19 Year 2: 10 Year 3: 13 Year 4: 13 Year 5: 1
IR 5. A network is established between the CSLC and the national and international academia		
5.1. Scholars participating in 1 international and 3 national conferences	Minimum 50	850
IR 6. Necessary material conditions to undertake social scientific research are fulfilled: library collection and computer facilities are available		
6.1. Miniumum volumes in the new library	1300	3500
6.2. Computers with necessary software available at the CSLC	6 by the end of Y2	9
6.3. Digital voice recorders available	6 by the end of Y2	6
INTERMEDIATE RESULTS (IR) – EXTENSION RELATED		
IR 7. Feedback loop between the CSLC and local society in Karnataka, its self-government bodies, its policy makers and its NGOs is initiated		
7.1. NGO representatives/policy makers participating	Minimum 10 every year from Y2 onwards	Year 2: 20 Year 3: 10 Year 4: 17 Year 5: 29
7.2. Gram Panchayat members participating	Minimum 20 every year from Y2 onwards	Year 2: 17 Year 3: 80 Year 4: 50 Year 5: 50
7.3. Individuals attending Arivu lectures	Minimum 25 every year	Year 2: 150 Year 3: 200 Year 4: 1244 Year 5: 307

FUTURE ROLE AND LEADERSHIP OF THE CSLC IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL KARNATAKA

The CSLC has grown over the last few years and has shown its capabilities. Today it is ready to take on a leading role in the development of human resources in the rural areas of Karnataka, in the much neglected field of social science research and education.

On the next page some strategic targets are listed for the CSLC activities of the next five years.

Ensuring sustainable impact requires consistent efforts over considerable time periods. In the case of human resource development, and that too in rural areas, this has meant at least ten years of concerted efforts at the grassroots level before results and subsequent impact on the quality of education and research (human resources) is visible for all to see. Because the CSLC wants the current results to be continued, it intends to work towards its dream and find means to sustain itself and its activities over the next few years.

(1) The realisation of the Master's Programme in Cultural Studies and a Diploma course in the Comparative Study of Cultures: The aim of this programme is to formalise and sustain some of the teaching methods, tools and material developed by the CSLC over the last few years that address the problems of rural students and teachers.

(2) Study India Programme: Many European and American universities have a Stay Abroad Programme as a part of their degree education. The CSLC intends to offer a variety of short courses on local cultures and cultural difference for students who will visit India under this programme.

Registration at the 5th Dharma & Ethics conference (January 2011)

(3) Continuing the link between the university and the common people: Through its outreach programmes, extension lectures, translations and popularising articles the CSLC has initiated an interaction with the general public about its research. The latter has become the testing ground for its research, thus ensuring the social relevance of the research. It will be kept as a strategy.

(4) The CSLC has evolved innovative methods of imparting reading, comprehension and presentation skills to college and university students. The workshops on Research Methods and Modes have trained almost 1000 students of various colleges and universities of Karnataka. These workshops can be adopted for regular educational programmes in colleges and universities.

(5) The translation of social science material into Kannada has so far been sustained on the basis of individual interests and strengths in the CSLC. In the next few years this practice has to be institutionalised. One of the ways of doing this is to incorporate it into the courses that the CSLC will teach and to produce a group of trained translators who have a strong understanding of local culture and its needs.

(6) A research library and database: One of the main problems of students working in rural areas is the lack of access to up-to-date research libraries and other material. The CSLC wants to fill this gap by enhancing its library resources and inviting all interested researchers to make use of it. It also intends to make all its fieldwork data and all other data that it has created over the years available on its website. This involves a huge process of transcription and translation if it is to be made available in English.

SOME GENERAL EXPRESSIONS ABOUT THE CSLC AND ITS FUTURE

In the field of social sciences within the state, the University [Kuvempu University] has been in the forefront by taking initiative ... Perhaps this is the first of its kind in the country as a whole. The authorities in the University (the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar as well as the members of the Faculty) responsible for its establishment deserve complements.

The Academic and Administrative Audit Committee, 2009-10

There is a genuine commitment to learning and research on the part of scholars associated with CSLC. I have always found them excitedly discussing an article or a book. What is more heartening is the fact that scholars from different disciplines within the Social Sciences have come together and shown the courage to cross disciplinary boundaries. The centre has clearly demonstrated good Social Science research can be done through the medium of Kannada.

Prof. G.Sivaramakrishnan, one of the associated researchers

CSLC has done a commendable job in creating a research culture in and around Kuvempu University. It has demonstrated that cutting edge research can be done in Kannada and in a non-metropolitan university. Once the research undertaken at CSLC in the last 5-6 years is made available to the public, I am certain that it will have a positive impact on the academic culture of the State.

Dr. Vivek Dhareswar, one of the associated researchers

From the wide and demanding collection of data in the villages to many presentations at international and domestic conferences, from the training of promising young researchers to challenges of dominant views on the Indian society, from rough theses to fine publications, the CSLC team has brought admirable results. The "Own-initiative" project is certainly a great success and I wish that the CSLC team will go on with its important research.

Dr. Martin Fárek, assistent professor at the University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

I am an ordinary B.A. graduate. I was working in an industry at Bangalore. I am very grateful to Prof. Balagangadhara for hiring me as an Administrative officer to the CSLC. I also express my gratitude to his entire research group for giving the opportunity to work in this awe-inspiring environment. A few words about the distinctness of the CSLC: it changed my perspective on life through participation in seminars, workshops and special lectures organised by the Centre. Through these programs, I started to realize that, whatever I read in my student life are all not real or true descriptions and knowledge about ourselves. At this point, I was inspired by this research program and I wanted to be involved as a researcher in this centre rather than as administration officer. As a result, I am now a doing post-graduation in political science. After the completion of this post-graduation, I am interested in doing research within the background of Centre's research theme. And I wish centres like this would establish across India and develop new kinds of social science, producing better knowledge about Indian society than before.

Indudhara S.E., CSLC Administrative Officer

MORE ABOUT US

The CSLC has been built by two teams, one at Ghent University and one at Kuvempu University. Below are the names of the staff and the students of both teams.

The staff at Kuvempu University

- Prof. J.S. Sadananda, Local Promoter
- Prof. Rajaram Hegde, Director
- Dr. Shanmukha A., Deputy Director
- Dr. Dunkin Jalki, Research Coordinator
- Sandeep Kumar Shetty, Administrator of Academic Activities (Programme Officer)
- Indudhara S.E., Local Administrative Officer

The PhD students

- Santhosh Kumar P. K.
- Mahesh Kumar C.S.
- Shankarappa N.S.
- Kavitha P.N.
- Praveen T.L.
- Shivakumar P.V.
- Veena E.
- Chaitra Yogini

The Ghent team

- Prof. S.N. Balagangadhara, Promoter
- Dr. Jakob de Roover, Project Coordinator
- Dr. Sarah Claerhout, Assistant Project Coordinator
- Marianne Keppens, Assistant Project Coordinator
- Nele de Gersem, Assistant Project Coordinator
- Anne Cardinael, Assistant Project Coordinator
- Alexander Naessens, Assistant Project Coordinator

Besides the two teams a number of **visiting scholars** have been supporting the CSLC by giving research input and training to the CSLC students:

Affiliated Researchers:

- Dr. Vivek Dhareshwar, Srishti School of Art and Design, Bangalore
- Dr. G. Sivaramakrishnan, National Law School of India,University, Bangalore
- Dr. Sufiya Pathan, Sophia College for Women, Mumbai
- Ms. Polly Hazarika, SNDT University, Mumbai
- Prof. Martin Farek, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

Visiting Scholars

- Prof. Narahari Rao, Saarland University, Germany
- Ms Esther Bloch, Ghent University College, Belgium
- Dr. Raf Gelders, Ghent University, Belgium
- Dr. Lakshmi Arya, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla
- Prof. Ravindra Gadkar, Kuvempu University, Shimoga
- Prof. T.P. Vijay, Kannadda University, Hampi
- Prof. Jamuna, Bangalore University, Bangalore
- Prof. Rajaram Tolpadi, Mangalore University, Mangalore
- Dr. Prakash Shah, Queen Mary University, UK
- Dr. Ajakkal Girish Bhat, GFG College, Bantwal
- Dr. Shubhangana Atre, Deccan College, Pune.
- Mr. Venkat N Rao (VNR)
- Mr. Vijeyendra Acharya, Mumbai
- Mr. Shashikant Anathachari, Director, Chennai

The Belgian and the Indian team – A reflection from Dr. Jakob De Roover, Project Coordinator

When the project was approved in 2007, all participants were aware that there would be many obstacles to overcome. After all, the project required collaboration between two groups of people that were as different as they come. One was a group of students and teaching faculty at a rural university in Karnataka, India. Their general command of English was as poor as was the overall state of social-scientific research and for them, Europe was a far-off place known mainly as a donor of funding. The other group consisted of a handful of young European students and researchers working in Ghent, Belgium. They had been engaged in a theoretical research project on cultural difference. They lacked any command of Kannada, the local language of Karnataka, and had hardly any experience in rural India. At the time, the only bridge between the two groups was the promoter of the VLIR-UOS Own Initiative, Professor Balagangadhara, who knew both the peoples and the languages of Flanders and Karnataka, after having lived in both regions for decades.

Today, in 2013, the two groups no longer exist. It is not that they have disintegrated. They have merged into one research group with branches in different parts of the world and driven by shared questions and concerns. The research project that unites the group also gives it one common heartbeat. Today, its members have an equal concern for the future of India and for that of Europe. The CSLC has created a research group where anyone can join in the search for truth, Indian, European or other. The problems examined do not merely focus on 'local cultures' but go to the heart of Indian and European culture, society and politics. For instance, how did the Indian traditions cope with the resolution of conflicts between individuals or groups of people? What can other cultures like Europe learn from these traditional modes of conflict resolution? It is thanks to the VLIR-UOS project that a first and very important step in building joint research groups in social sciences could be taken.

Santhosh Kumar P.K., PhD student, about his experience

A boy from a rural area, with very poor English language skills, is now writing about his experiences in English. This is possible because of this project. I was born and brought up in a rural area, and I did my studies until post-graduation in Kannada Medium, which is one of the regional languages in India.

I joined the VLIR initiative project in 2007, as a research fellow at the Centre for the Study of Local Cultures, Kuvempu University, Shimoga. After joining the project, I came to understand that real research is possible in social science only in this kind of center. In fact, I thought that subjects in social sciences like political science, sociology, history, only existed for exam purposes. Because of their irrelevance to my life, I neglected them during my studies. But now the situation is different, I feel that social science has something to do with my life. Through this project and research center, I myself and a lot more people have learnt so many things which are very useful to our intellectual progress. Along with that, we also learnt how a human being should live.

Prof. Balu is the great inspiration for us in this kind of research. And my teachers like Rajaram Hegde, Sadananda, and Shanmukha have also dedicated their life in order to work on this project. They also inspired and taught me a lot, and they are still guiding me to work properly. Now I am very proud of the center, as well as my own development. And I am able to distinguish myself intellectually from my fellow beings who are engaged in research. In my research - in fact, not just my research, but the research of our group - I am working on rituals. Through my research, I tried to show some of the problems in understanding Indian culture and rituals.

This project helped me in several ways: it gave an opportunity to work with my teachers and work with great philosopher Prof. Balu; it gave a different outlook to see the things in society and helped me to develop new perspectives in social sciences; it also helped me to learn English; it gave global exposure to people like me; it gave me so much confidence that I can teach political science in a different manner; and it showed the importance of group work. Now I am not alone, I have a number of people with me who can always encourage me to work hard.

More information about the CSLC can be found on:

- www.cslc.in
- https://www.facebook.com/CSLC.Ind
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre_for_the_Study_of_Local_Cultures

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- Dr. Shanmukha Armugam (Deputy Director)
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I have this dream in next 30 years, when people talk about "Indian Renaissance", how it was initiated in the small village near Shimoga with some Kannada speaking rural boys and girls, the achievement of CSLC in the field of India studies. I will sit in an easy chair in front of a large photo of our group on the wall, next to my grandchildren, holding 1295th book produced by the group, and say "I WAS THERE WHEN IT ALL BEGAN".

Sandeep Kumar Shetty,
Programme Officer at the CSLC

The impact of this project on us is immense. one of those is I started enjoying my wife doing puja in dasara, deepavali and other festivals, which I was irritated by before. The project has brought back my culture to me through which I am back in my social life. I am helping my students to unlearning ignorance and relearning the process of learning to understand our social world.

Dr. Shanmukha Armugam,
CSLC Deputy Director

All participants in this project want to thank the Flemish Interuniversity Council - University Development Cooperation for the support. It has made a difference in their lives and it has been a valuable part in the development of social sciences in India.

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